

REMARKS

This application has been amended so as to place it in condition for allowance at the time of the next Office action.

As a procedural matter, Applicants note that Form PTO-892 issued as an attachment to the Official Action of February 6, 2003, to which the present filing responds, identifies the newly-cited WATANABE et al. reference correctly by inventor name, but it identifies the patent number as "278148" instead of "6278148". Applicants therefore respectfully request that the next Official Action include a corrected Form PTO-892.

The Official Action of February 6, 2003 rejected claims 1, 2, 6, 7, and 9-24 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over SAITOU et al. in view of WATANABE et al. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested for the following reasons:

In connection with the rejected method claims, the Official Action asserts that the SAITOU et al. reference teaches or suggests all of the recited method steps. The Official Action acknowledges, however, that SAITOU et al. do not clearly disclose the requirement that each of the functional blocks comprises a plurality of gates. It is this feature for which the secondary WATANABE et al. reference is offered.

Applicants note that the WATANABE et al. reference is the only reference applied for teaching the division of the

various gates into logical blocks. In column 7, lines 49-51, this reference identifies M4W as the wiring layer between logic cells within the logical block. In column 8, lines 5-6, M6W is described as representing the sixth-layer metal wiring formed between logical blocks.

Therefore, while the WATANABE et al. patent describes separate wiring for intra-block and inter-block wiring, it also teaches that all of such wiring should be built up on the same substrate, not separated as in the present invention.

Please note that Applicant has cancelled all pending claims, and added new claims 25-47. Such new claims are believed to recite features that the prior art neither discloses, teaches, nor suggests.

Applicants further note that claims 25-46 have been allowed in the Japanese application corresponding the present application.

In light of the amendments described above and the arguments offered in support thereof, Applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or requires further clarification of any of the above points, the Examiner may contact the undersigned Attorney so that this application may continue to be expeditiously advanced.

Application No. 09/613,331
Amdt. dated August 29, 2003
Reply to Office Action of June 23, 2003
Docket No. 8040-1041

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON

Eric Jensen
Eric Jensen, Reg. No. 37,855
Attorney for Applicants
745 South 23rd Street
Arlington, VA 22202
Telephone (703) 521-2297
Telefax (703) 685-0573
(703) 979-4709

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EJ/bsg